Issue 42: The off-season we had to have

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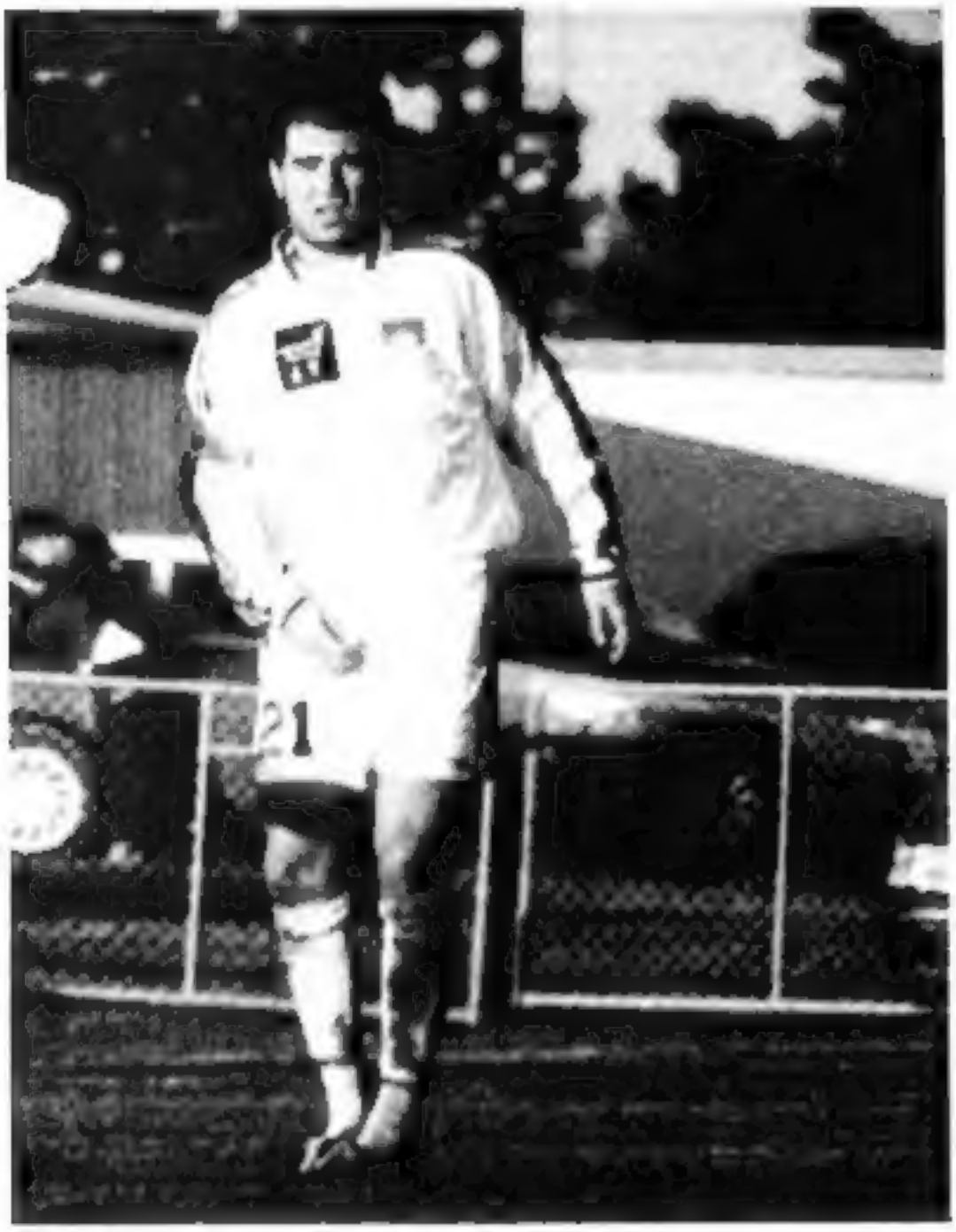
$3

(which is dirt cheap if you read the entire contents)

StudsUp

The Australian Fans' Perspective

Welcome to Victoria...



... and the dodgy bit in the middle

But that's not all...

Frank Farina
The right man for the job?

Interview with Socceroo legend **Max Tolson**

Aussie Pioneers
The ORIGINAL Aussies abroad

Club 80
The most exclusive club in Oz Soccer?

And introducing every administator's worst nightmare...
The Black Card

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Happy snaps: Michael Cronin and anyone else who feels the urge.

DISCLAIMER (of sorts)

Studs Up is a fanzine, and should be treated as such. The opinions expressed throughout each issue have usually been influenced by decades of watching Australian soccer shoot itself in the foot, both at domestic and international levels. These views may also have been clouded through years of not maintaining a healthy balance of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages. No offence or offense is intended and none should be taken. If you believe you have been misquoted or misrepresented then at least give us the courtesy of talking to us before you sue us – you'll realise there's no point 'cos we don't have any money anyway.

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APOLOGY

Our sincere apologies to Anthony Ferguson, whose feature article last issue 'Important fixtures or meaningless friendlies?' was credited to Stevo, also a regular SU contributor.
The editor takes total responsibility for that and you can rest assured he has been kicked fair and square just below the coccyx.

To be perfectly frank...

The method used by the board of Soccer Australia to search for and then appoint a successor to Terry Venables has been embarrassing, to put it mildly.

Firstly Raul Blanco was appointed in a caretaker capacity for a period of time some overseas clubs would consider an era. Then, despite the lack of two twenty-cent coins to rub together, the bored(?) board then set about pursuing a high-profile, successful, respected international coach who would be willing to relocate to a far-off land where most of the best players don't play anymore.

Oh, and he won't have too many important international matches to concern himself with for another year or two, cos Raul is definitely in charge of the Olyroos.

The low budget approach to advertising (word-of-mouth) would hardly have inspired confidence in prospective applicants, but Roy Hodgson and others came, sniffed, and buggered off again, leaving the media a few red herrings to munch on while Blanco bit his bottom lip and hoped.

Finally common sense prevailed (did somebody import some?) and local candidates were invited to throw their akubras into the ring. This some did with gusto, and various media hounds lined up behind their preferred choice, although it is a scenario that does the selection process no favours.

Soccer Australia, having realised the budget had reduced the field to local candidates, should have headhunted their primary choice. To ask the candidates to present their CV may be viewed as standard interview procedure in the business world, but at Studs Up it heightens the suspicion that SocAus may not have been entirely aware of their own player's careers. Such a pity that Eddie, Dave and Ange haven't had books published yet...

On to the vote, and, quite correctly, Tony Labbozzetta stood down from the decision-making part of the process, in case of a *perceived* conflict of interest. Conflict of interest? One has to ask why it took that long to see he had a conflict of interest? So, he sat in on all the interviews, discussed those interviews with the fellow board members, and then doesn't vote. And one of the candidates is the coach of the club he is the president of? Whose time was he wasting? His, the board's or the candidates'?

So, finally we have a board of four making the most important decision since Venables' appointment, when the constitution allows for a board of seven.

And while we're having a go at the national body's decision-making process, we may as well have a go at their non-decision-making process.

The number of serious question marks hanging over Adelaide Sharks in the lead-up to the new season has now surely reached double figures. It has now got to the stage where SocAus will claim it is too late to leave them out, but news that the Sharks have failed to come up with a second repayment in their scheme of arrangement must have sent a shiver through SocAus HQ. Was it just co incidence that the Sharks received a bye in the first round?

We were concerned a couple of issues back that the governing body may lack the spine to draw a REAL line in the sand. If any of the 'approved' clubs fail to make the starting line, it will expose the board's lack of judgement to the entire business community.
Precisely what we don't need right now.

Everyone has an opinion on the latest national coaching appointment, but Steve Pitman has taken on the task of pin-pointing just why Frank Farina may be

The right man for the job

Every now and then something happens which encourages you to believe that Australian soccer can, after all, make it out of the wilderness to a better future.
Such a thing happened on August 18 when in this, the last year of the 20th century, Soccer Australia made what could turn out to be the most inspired decision it will make for the 21st century.
That decision was the appointment of Frank Farina to be coach of the Socceroos.

Reaction to Farina's appointment has been mainly positive, although a few detractors have doubted Farina's ability to get us to the 2002 World Cup. Primarily, they point to his relative inexperience in coaching. The conventional wisdom is that to be successful in international soccer a coach must, at the very least, have many years of experience at club level.

Are they right? Well, I'm no coach. I'm a soccer fan and, as we are often reminded, fans are qualified only to give mug's opinions on whether a person can coach. Nevertheless, I'll venture the opinion that coaching at international level must be about different things to coaching at club or youth level. Surely when you are dealing with international-quality players it is less about the nitty-gritty of improving players' technique and fitness than about the tactical and man-management side of things. That is, it's about picking the right players to play the right systems, analysing the strengths and weaknesses of the opposition against those of your own team, moulding the best possible team spirit and motivating the players to perform at their best when it really matters.

As far as the tactical side of things goes, Farina is probably still learning. Then again, so are Aime Jacquet, Carlos Alberto Parreira, Terry Venables and, yes, even Les Scheinflug.
As far as man-management and motivational things go, though, I've got a strong feeling that SA has picked a very gifted individual.

For starters, there is the testimony of some of the players who have been coached by Farina. To a man, they seem to be saying that Farina has qualities that players respect.
For instance, Chris Zoricich of the Brisbane Strikers and New Zealand, was quoted in Inside Soccer as saying:

"He's honest, straight up-and-down. What you see is what you get and players like that and respect him not only for what he's achieved but for his attitude. I don't see that we'd have any easy games against you guys with him sitting on the coaching bench"

But we don't necessarily need Farina's players to tell us about his man-management and motivational skills. There are a few signs from Farina's three years of coaching in the NSL that even grandstand goofballs like me can use to form an opinion.

Let's look at Farina's first year with the Strikers, which finished with the club winning the NSL Grand Final at its first and only attempt. He achieved this not with a fancied squad, but with one which began the season at bookmakers' odds of 66-1.
The squad consisted of a bunch of old-timers such as Alan Hunter, Rod Brown and Danny Wright (who were thought by many to be over the hill), augmented by a few twenty-something but unfashionable players (such as Glen Gwynne and Troy Cranney), and a bunch of almost untried kids fresh out of the Queensland Academy of Sport (for example, Kasey Wehrman and Wayne Knipe).

The team began the season well and by the half-way mark were duelling with Sydney United for top spot on the ladder. The most impressive thing about the team, though, was not their position on the ladder, but the attitude with which they were playing. Gone was the cautious team of previous seasons which eked out results at home but seemed to travel away with trepidation and self-doubt. It had been replaced by a team which, despite minimal changes of personnel, played with potency and even a swagger at home and with new-found aggression and self-belief away from home. It seemed that a revolution in confidence had been wrought by Farina.

For me, however, the most significant indicator in Farina's first coaching season of his possible value to the Socceroos came when things weren't going so well. There was a period in the latter part of the season when the Strikers endured a mini horror run of injuries and suspension that saw their form plummet until they were on the verge of dropping out of the top six.
In the midst of this slump, Farina's public support for his squad (including the fringe players who were now called to the front line) never wavered. In fact, he talked them up both individually and collectively, insisting that they had the quality to keep the club in the finals hunt.
The refusal to hide behind excuses that had always been evident in Farina's playing career, was now showing itself in his coaching.

The season threatened to go right off the rails coming into one home match against (ironically) an in-form Marconi, when the Strikers were obliged to field a decimated line-up and were one loss from falling out of the six. Marconi played them off the park in the first half, but held only a 1-0 lead. Most home fans probably felt that the second half would be a matter of "how far" for the visitors, and that the season was heading into oblivion.
However, the second half saw the Strikers' bare-bones eleven set about Marconi with rabid tenacity. The flow of the match turned, and a fabulous length-of-the-field run by Troy Cranney topped off by an audacious near post goal from an acute angle, proved to be the precursor to a late winner. The Strikers' season never looked back.

A similar scenario occurred for Farina last season at Marconi. After the team had sat in the top four most of the season, a run of injuries and suspensions saw the Stallions almost slip out of finals contention.
Once again, Farina refused to hit the panic button, maintained his support for, and belief in, his players and simply would not consider the possibility of missing the finals.
Again, his team came from behind in a crunch match (this time, most memorably, in a late-season fixture against Carlton), and recovered to finish fourth on the NSL ladder.
They then performed admirably in the finals series, notably without the services of their most influential player, skipper Brad Maloney.

To me it's obvious that Farina has an ability to keep players believing in themselves so they can get a result when the chips are down. I can't help feeling that this will be priceless at some point during the next World Cup qualification campaign.
The quality of opponent we will face in South America if we get past the Kiwis is going to be very high, and the conditions and atmosphere away from home are going to be every bit as daunting as they were in Teheran in '97.

Farina's skill as a communicator probably has a lot to do with his being able to bring out the best in players in trying circumstances.
Perversely, this skill is perhaps well illustrated by an off-the-field example related to me by a work colleague. This colleague was not a soccer fan and knew little and cared less about the game or Farina. Nevertheless, he was present when Farina had been invited as a speaker at a large gathering of corporate types in Brisbane. My colleague said to me:

"Mate, this guy (Farina) was very impressive. He got up and spoke to this room full of people as easily as if he was talking to just you or me. He was inspirational. An absolute natural..."

Picture this ability to inspire people, this time in the setting of the Socceroo dressing room before a big game. Imagine Farina's message to the players being reinforced by their knowledge of his unquenchable will-to-win as a player, of his pride in the Australian

Frank Farina - My World is Round
Available at Melbourne Sports Books
9 Elizabeth St, Melbourne
Ph: 9621 1211 Fax: 9621 1383

shirt, and of his burning ambition to spread the popularity of the game in this country by giving it a national team it can look up to.
It'd be worth being a fly on the wall!

And there will be a bonus with Farina - an area where he could exert an even bigger and more lasting influence than the one than he can achieve via a fired up dressing room with the players he puts on the field.
That bonus is this. We now have, for the first time, a coach who exudes "Aussie" from every pore. Most Australians are going to be able to relate to this man.
In my memory, every utterance by the coach of Australia's soccer team has previously been delivered with a foreign accent. This has meant that the man who, to your average Australian in the street, represents the font of all wisdom about the game in this country, has unwittingly re-inforced the notion that soccer is not a game for Australians – that it is a game understood properly and played well only in far-off continents.
Terry Venables at last got Australians to realise that we could play the game well, but there was still the notion that somehow the credit for that belonged in England. This kind of thinking will now cease because Farina has such a recognisably Australian persona. He will speak as an Australian, to Australians, for Australians and he will do so extremely well.

We all know that the task facing Farina is monumental. Let's be honest - on the road to the World Cup finals he will face more terrors then Crash Bandicoot. Amongst other problems, we currently have players who don't want to play for us, an administration which can't afford a decent World Cup preparation, a world governing body which often appears not to understand or care about the problems facing soccer in the Oceania region, a national league still struggling to make the changes it needs to progress, a media with a history of indifference or outright hostility towards the game, and a public which has been conditioned to give its support only once in every four years. And then there's the opposition!

It's the kind of task that only the strongest of personalities could succeed in, but I reckon Farina has exactly that kind of personality and that he will get the Socceroos to the World Cup finals. Perhaps more importantly than that, his natural empathy with the Australian public might just enable him to unite the nation behind the team and the sport (which, by all accounts, did not happen in 1974 when the Socceroos went to their only World Cup). Ultimately, that would leave a more lasting legacy.

First to be or not first to be? That was the question.

The fanfare which greeted Farina's appointment as national coach certainly wasn't without controversy. A number of press releases claimed that Frank was Australia's first born and bred national coach – which nobody in the media seemed to want to question. Oh, and Oz's first World Cup coach as well, even though there is probably at least twelve months before our WC qualifiers get underway. After all, most of the media were happy for Frank to get the job and they queued up, almost to a man, to signal their approval and were therefore happy to put forward any positive spin on the news.

But, our own Dr Stock certainly put the cat amongst the pigeons when putting forward the claims of Joe Marston, who had coached Australia against club sides in the 1960s. A few journos scoffed, claiming Roma and co. hardly constituted an international, but they were forced to backpedal once it became clear that Marston was responsible for coaching Oz against the Kiwis in the late 1950s.

Further, the Hall of Fame booklet gives the following insight into Alf Quill:

"He made seven national appearances for eight goals and took up coaching after he retired. He was in charge of Australia in the match against Yugoslavia's Hadjuk Split in late 1949."

See you back here next month.

Welcome to the page where it's got to the stage, Where yellow and red ain't enough
If has gotten so bad, we've gone a bit rad, And figured black is more the right stuff

Get the Book out!

BLACK CARD to Oceania Football Confederation, or more specifically the organisers (1st) of the inaugural Oceania Club Championship. It was bad enough when they started fiddling with the group fixtures. It was pathetic when they suddenly decided semi finals would be now be necessary. But, less than a week before the tournament commenced, they decide to include another team, increasing the number of clubs to nine. So, we won't have two convenient groups of four, we'll have three groups of three with the best runner-up qualifying for the semis along with the group winners. Add to that the complete disregard for the media when it came to basic details of the competition. By basic details we mean squad lists. Just over a week before the tournament was due to kick off we got in contact with the OFC and asked for said lists but all we got was *" these lists are not finalised until the start of the competition "*
Must make it handy for the programme producers! Or don't things like squad lists matter? In a month's time the OFC will no doubt be whinging about the low profile the media has afforded the tournament. In which case we'll see them back here next month...

Red Card to Soccer Australia for once again completely ballsing up the Ericsson Cup fixture list. How difficult can it possibly be to do? After numerous drafts and amendments they finally come up with a fixture without a match in Melbourne on Australia Day! And a fixture that gives Adelaide Force two byes in succession!

Yellow Card to the Melbourne Age who somehow managed to print the reserves results and tables for the final round of the Victorian Premier League season. It was bad enough that no reporter was present to witness Green Gully's triumph (their soccer journalist, Michael Lynch was in China at the club's expense) but to even get the tables incorrect defies belief. Former Age stalwart Laurie Schwab would be turning in his grave.

Yellow Card to Parramatta Power, who are having a bit of trouble convincing some of us of their commitment to the (new) cause. PR manager Trish Sinclair is happy enough to take enquiries, even by e mail. But when the contact address is parraoc@parraleagues.net.au then, well, you have to be concerned.

Yellow Card to The Australian Sporting Times – the newest publication on the block from the oldest editor on the block (sorry Bruce), Bruce Campbell. But maybe Bruce should employ a new proofreader if the Sept 1-7 issue is any indication. Page 27 featured a full page article with the **headline "PARRAMATTA POWER TO SEASON OFF AGAINST SYDNEY UNITED"** where "Soccer's Top Writer" explains how the match may be a 25,000 sell-out, while a quarter page ad on page 26 (yes, the adjacent page) screams **"POWER IS COMING – HISTORIC FIRST MATCH! – PARRAMATTA POWER VS MARCONI-FAIRFIELD"**. For the record, the official SocAus fixture reckons SU will be hosting NS.

And finally a **STERN warning** to journalists who 'write' match reports despite not attending the game, or even worse, not even seeing the game! Yes, we've all done match reports from televised matches on occasions, but since the introduction of the Internet there has been a disturbing increase in this sort of thing. Another glaring example coming to light when the Joeys played in Bahrain. For Mark at ABSW to want to supply a match report is great, but for him not to acknowledge the source is a worry.

The dodgy bit in the middle

Way back during the National Soccer Summit in May of 1995, most speakers tended to agree that the top and bottom of Australia's footballing pyramid (the Socceroos and the junior playing base) were doing okay. It was the bit in the middle (the NSL) that was the problem.

Four years later sees the NSL enjoying a renaissance of sorts, and new franchise teams chasing the pot of World Club Cup gold at the end of the rainbow, so the time may be right to look at that other bit in the middle – the state leagues. With good cause as well, because if this past season in Victoria is indicative of what's going on elsewhere, then it may be time for another summit.

To be fair, Studs Up and its Victorian readers have tended to turn their noses up at the Victorian Premier League in recent years, except when it comes to finals time, when you can pay your admission fee reasonably safe in the knowledge you will see a good quality game. So when the VSF decided to abolish the successful final five format for the 1999 season, the groans from around the metropolitan area were audible. The grand final had consistently attracted around 5-6,000 spectators in recent years and there seemed no reason to abandon such a money-spinner, but that's soccer in Victoria for you.

The result was a return to the 'European' way of deciding things which has pleased the purists but not the accountants, with some clubs suffering embarrassing attendances for important fixtures - fixtures that have also been decided by the 'European' way if you believe some of the rumours.

Of particular concern was the final weeks of an absorbing relegation struggle which climaxed in an emotion-charged finale between Altona East Phoenix and the visiting Springvale White Eagles – a match in which the Sweagles needed a victory to avoid the drop and the hosts needed a point to do likewise. Tense stuff, for sure, particularly when an incident from the penultimate round is considered.

The previous week had seen Springvale host Bentleigh Greens in a match which could have seen the hosts relegated. The free-scoring Greens (who had netted 30 goals in their past seven outings) hardly troubled the opposing keeper and went down 0-1, giving the Sweagles an invaluable lifeline as they headed to Altona. Rumours that the 1-0 scoreline was known a couple of weeks in advance were taken with a grain of salt initially, but more on that later.

Of greater concern was an incident which occurred five minutes from time, when a clumsy challenge by Bentleigh's Tom Karapatsos on goalscorer Jim Gacovski resulted in swinging arms and fists from the players. Worse, it incited a dash from the bench from Sweagles skipper Zlatko Mihaljovic to become 'third man in' in what developed into an ugly melee. (At this point it should be noted that Mihaljovic was serving a suspension for accumulated yellow cards, and as such should not have been on the bench in the first place.) Referee Robert Caminiti flashed red cards at Karapatsos and Gacovski and also sent Mihaljovic from the field.

The incident provoked great discussion amongst the occupants of the press box, which included VSF president George Wallace and former Soc Aus board member Dom Di Fabrizio. While the melee was met with universal disapproval, the dialogue soon centred around the likely penalties (Gacovski would obviously miss the vital final round match against Altona East) rather than whether the players were guilty of various offences.

The incident itself was distasteful enough but what followed is perhaps a more serious indictment on the game in Victoria.

During the week, SU contacted the VSF and requested a list of players suspended for the final round. We were advised that such a list was unavailable, so we dropped the veil and asked specifically about Zlatko Mihaljovic.

Yes, Mihaljovic was clear to play, he had served his existing suspension, and as nothing was noted on the referee's report there would be no further action.

This brings us to an interesting point. Point 4 (l) to be exact, from the VSF 1999 Yearbook (page 197), under the heading Statement of Purposes of the VSF. 4. Powers of the Federation:

> *(l) To expel, suspend, disqualify, fine or otherwise deal with any member club, club, league or affiliated organisation, player, officer or official of any Clubs, league, affiliated league, affiliated organisation of the Federation and/or other person, established from time to time by the Federation, who or which shall have committed any breach of the rules, regulations or by-laws established from time to time by the Federation of who or which shall have been guilty of any conduct which in the opinion of the Federation is contrary to the interest of the Game and the Federation.*

And from the VSF Constitution, Point 7 – Discipline of Members:

> *A member shall not act in a manner unbecoming of a member or prejudicial to the objects and interests of the Federation or sport generally or bring the Federation or sport generally into disrepute.*

Having been a witness to the scenes at Springvale, why wouldn't the president of the Federation initiate an investigation? Perhaps the answer can be found in Point 28.3:

> *The president shall not be summoned to testify as witnesses before any Federation disciplinary body.*

Well, yes, that means that George Wallace wouldn't be required to give evidence at a possible tribunal hearing, but it certainly doesn't mention anything in 28.3 (or anywhere else as far as we can see) about the president not initiating an inquiry into an unsavoury event.

And what of the referee? Why wouldn't he mention something in his report about the melee, especially one involving people not directly participating in the match?
And what of the match inspector? Why wouldn't he mention something in his report about the melee.

A spokesman for the the Soccer Referees Victoria Incorporated was kind enough to point out that it would be a matter of internal policy at the VSF as to whether they released the contents of a referee's and inspector's report. Naturally, the head of the VSF's Disciplinary Committee suggested we put our request in writing. Rather than postpone the deadline, we'll get back to you on that next issue. It should be worth holding your breath for.

Footnote 1: *Zlatko Mihaljovic was awarded the Bill Fleming medal on September 16 for the 'media panel player of the year'. In what is viewed by some as a curious decision, we will attempt to provide further details next month. It may just make remarkable reading.*
Footnote 2: *The VSF are happy to promote the 2000 season as a new start for soccer in Victoria (er, make that metropolitan Melbourne) with a reduction in teams in each division and a regionalisation of the lower leagues (see last issue). But the people who have presided over this season's debacle will preside over a twelve team Victorian Premier League which features five Greek clubs and no club outside a 20km radius of the GPO. And we haven't found ANYONE in metropolitan Melbourne who thinks that is a good idea.*

"I made a decision that I wasn't going to have friends in the dressing-room"

Alan Clark gets inside the mind of South Melbourne coach Ange Postecoglou

South's young coach Ange Postecoglou doesn't have much of a media profile, but his record over the three seasons he's been in charge at Bob Jane has shown his coaching qualities - reaching the Preliminary Final in his first year, and being back-to-back Champions in the two years that followed.

Postecoglou was previously a long-serving South player, and had plenty of opportunity to observe the revolving-door of coaching appointments which had preceded his.

Alan Clark recently spent some time with Postecoglou prior to South's trip to Fiji for the OFC Club Championship matches and asked Postecoglou about what he's learnt from those coaches and what he's applied of this knowledge to his own coaching.

"You do pick up things. Just about every coach I've had I've picked up things. Not necessarily the right things to do - sometimes it helps illustrate the wrong things, and as a player you think, that's just not right, the coach is not really reading the situation right. Early in my playing career - I became captain when I was 22 - coaches tended to include me in a lot of things.

So I was in a leadership role from very early on, and I was thinking about things, like training sessions, or man-management, or how you react to situations. All of my coaches had good ideas, some of them had bad ideas, but the one key ingredient was that the successful ones were very single-minded about their approach - the way they wanted their team to play.

There was always something about them that was single-minded, and they would not change that regardless of what players thought, or the committee or the fans thought, and they tended to be more successful.

"The other thing was that in all the successful sides I'd played in, there was always a good atmosphere in the dressing-rooms. When I looked at all my coaches, what I took out of the successful ones was a single-minded approach to aspects of the game, and a good team atmosphere.

I think that's evident in the team, and the way we play."

Postecoglou had to make the jump from recent player to boss. Often that's a transition that's fraught, and it's rarely a surprise when it all ends in tears. Somehow, Postecoglou has made the transition. I asked him how an ex-player moves from team-mate to boss successfully.

"Because I took over at such a young age - I was 30 when I took over as coach and there were players here that were older than me - I made a decision that I wasn't going to have friends in the dressing-room. I know the perception is because I'm a young coach, I'm pretty close to the players, but only to a certain extent.

I've purposely kept my distance from them. The closest I am to a player is probably Trimmers (captain Paul Trimboli - only in his early 30s but a long-time South player, and favourite of the fans). *We were good friends when I was a player here, but I've put a gap, a bit of distance between us, not that he needs that, it's just that I wouldn't want a perception in the dressing-room that I was closer to one player than anyone else.*

"It's been easier, without having that close personal relationship with any of the players, to make (the hard) decisions. The way I wanted to set things up, I wanted a big squad, and quality players, and when that happens you have the problem of managing those players. Good players (not selected) know that at any other club they'd probably be playing, but here they're not. How do you keep them happy - how do you keep them effective? And so I made the decision that I wasn't going to get too close to any of them and I've been pretty consistent in that.

"The players then know that whatever decision I make, I make on the basis that I'm picking the best team that I think will win us the game on the day. Regardless of what happened last week, regardless of what happened in the last five years.

If the player was suspended the week before and the team won ten-nil, if I think that player will win us the game this weekend, and is in the best eleven, he'll come back in.

The players know that, and I've been consistent in that. That's annoying for some players because they think that 'Well, I've come in and done a good job, why is he taking me out again and putting someone else in?' That's the way I've worked from day one.

I learnt that lesson early in my coaching career with a Victorian State League side. Because I was young, I walked around trying to make points, and I remember we won a game two-nil against one of the top sides, and two of my best players were suspended. The following week I went out and said that we'd never change a winning line-up and we played a side that was mid-table. Ten minutes before the end of the game we were losing three-nil. As I was sitting there, watching the game, I looked next to me and I had my two best players sitting alongside me on the bench. I remember thinking 'That's not right, what I've done. I've proved a point, yeah, but ultimately it's cost me three points'.

"I made the decision early on, that that was going to be my philosophy: come the weekend, the criteria was - which eleven is going to win me that game. And the players know that. I've had players that are very disappointed, but at the same time, our success has shown that we've been able to manage that pretty well."

Oceania club championship – A farce to be reckoned with?

New tournaments always attract a certain level of ridicule but the howls that will greet Oceania's newest competition are certain to be audible from across the Pacific. And they may not be howls of protest.

As in October 1998, New Zealand has been given the chance to kick Australia very hard between the legs by holding the tournament at the end of their domestic season, and before ours commences. The original scheduling of the tournament would have certainly provided South Melbourne with a few NSL matches under their belts before taking on the rest of the South Pacific, but the new dates suddenly provide the underdogs with an increased chance of success.

With yet another re-draw and semi-finals now being introduced into the equation, Ange's team is faced with two potential catastrophes.

Nobody should need reminding of October 1998, or November 1988 for that matter, but no amount of preparation can overcome diabolical scheduling, diabolical refereeing or diabolical pitches, two of which Ange has already been confirmed will be waiting for Souths. No, it isn't the referees. Well, we hope so anyway...

Note: See 'Look out for...' on page 36 for fixture details

Aussies Abroad? It's hardly a new phenomenon as Dr Stock discovered when researching the achievements of ...

Australia's TRUE European pioneers.

The first reported instance of an Australian born player heading overseas was prior to the turn of the century. His name was **James Jackson**, and apart from being our first footballing export, he was credited as the youngest ever player to play senior first team football at the age of 13 years and 7 months (for Hamilton Athletic v Wallsend in 1889). Taking in such clubs as Newcastle United, Glasgow Rangers and Woolwich Arsenal and unfamiliar ones like Renton and Port Glasgow in England, the Novacastrian seemingly had quite a career in the developing era of English football.

It wasn't until 1922 that the next Australian born footballer would leave our shores for a career in England. A young wing half by the name of **Alf (A.W.) Jennings** was a product of the footballing nursery of the Granville soccer club in Sydney's western suburbs. Donning the famous black and white bars of the Granville 'Magpies' Soccer Club in 1921 and 1922, the speedy teenager left in late 1922 for the mother country where he trialled and was signed by London club Tottenham Hotspurs. After a lengthy career with the club Alf went onto become a qualified English F.A. coach and return to Australia after the War in 1947. He took up a managerial position with the Metters club in Sydney but soon after returned to the U.K.

Although soccer was the popular sport in the 20s and 30s there is no evidence to suggest that any more players went overseas to try their luck in England. Some of the higher profile names in Sydney soccer like Jimmy Osborne and Bernard Bryant of the Metters club, were offered trials with English clubs but owing to the financial constraints of the great depression the players prefered to stick to their footballing lifestyles in Sydney.

Osborne for example was offered trials with Newcastle United and many keen judges of the time held no doubts that his committed style of play would have seen him on the first team roster of any club in England.

Reg Date was another whose mercurial goalscoring ability had earnt him unprecented interest in Sydney soccer. He also attracted his fair share of interest from English scouts who were interested in his tough and rugged playing style, but sadly for Reg and English football, Date never decided to take his talents abroad.

One player that Australia can lay claims to was wing half **Frank Mitchell**. The son of English parents, Frank was born in Sydney on June 3rd 1922 and learnt his footballing skills on the streets of the inner city. Just after his thirteenth birthday Frank's parents decided to return home to England and it was here that the young Frank further developed his passion for the round ball game.

During the early years of the Second World War Frank was playing as an amateur for struggling club Coventry City. After impressing some scouts at nearby Birmingham City he was transferred and signed professional forms in September 1943. He made 93 apps for 6 goals until January 1949. From there, Frank moved to Chelsea for another 75 appearances and 1 goal and then to Watford in August of 1952 for 193 appearances, before his retirement at the end of the 1956/7 season.

More noted for his career with Chelsea and Watford, Mitchell's identity as an Australian was never tested and sadly he was never afforded the opportunity to don the green and gold strip for his country of birth.

Following the Second World War a young, talented sportsman by the name of **Ken Grieves** was making a name for himself as an 'all rounder' in cricket and soccer circles. After scoring a century for the N.S.W cricket side against Victoria at the S.C.G. Ken became the target of an offer to play professional cricket in the Lancashire League in England. With no ties to worry about, the Leichhardt-Annandale and N.S.W. goalkeeper decided to accept the offer and left for Britain at the end of 1946.

It didn't take the local football club Wigan Athletic long to realise that Grieves was equally at home between the sticks as he was in the whites, and they snapped up the lanky Aussie on a professional contract. In April 1947 Grieves was transferred to Bury where he made 59 appearances before a move in December 1951 to first division club Bolton. It was here that Grieves made a name for himself, at the same time as his former Leichhardt-Annandale teamate Joe Marston, who was playing for Preston North End.

Grieves became the first choice goalkeeper for the Bolton side and wrote many articles in Australian soccer magazines about his experiences with Bolton. After a six season career at Bolton (49 apps), which was sadly limited by continual cricketing commitments, Grieves was again transferred to Stockport County in July 1957. He made a further 39 appearances until hanging up his boots in 1958.

Unfortunately Australian fans never got to see Grieves in action in Australia, when his club side Bolton's proposed tour of Australia in 1953 was cancelled.

The career of legendary Socceroo captain and coach **Joe Marston** needs little introduction. A product of the Prolestant Churches competition, Joe made his first team debut aged 17 with the Leichhardt-Annandale club in 1943. By 1945 he was a regular in the N.S.W state team as a right fullback and an Australian representative for all five matches against South Africa in 1947.

However it was his Leichhardt teammate Jock McMahon, a good friend of Joe's, that impressed a scout for Preston North End in the 1949 season. Jock was a nippy inside forward and Preston were looking for some speed on their forward line and so McMahon was offered an opportunity to trial with Preston. With family pressures concerning him, Jock declined the offer but put the scout in touch with his good friend Joe Marston.

From there history was made and it was Joe who ultimately accepted the offer of a trial with Preston North End. Marston was officially signed by the club in February 1950 and his former club Leichhardt-Annandale recieved the princely sum of 300 pounds as a transfer fee. In what is now a well documented story, Joe spent a full season in reserves as a fullback-cum-centre-half until a broken leg to the first team's centre-half gave him an opportunity. Two hundred appearances later (185 in premiership football and 15 in Cup games) Joe returned to Australia, a national hero after an F.A. Cup Final appearance, the captaincy of Preston North End in his final season and an appearance in the English League XI against a Scottish League XI.

Joe was considered by many judges in England as the finest centre-half of his era but in May 1955 homesickness saw the well-credentialled footballer return to Australia and play out another nine seasons with Leichhardt-Annandale and A.P.I.A.Leichhardt.

A welcome home dinner was held for Joe and wife Edith at the home of the Australian coach Viv Chalwin at Beauty Point. All the Sydney based Socceroos were there to welcome home one of Australia's finest soccer exports.

Joe's career in England saw him become the Australia's first ever born and bred Socceroo coach. Between 1957 and 1959 he was player/coach for the tour of Stanley Mathews' Blackpool side, a two match series against New Zealand, the series against Scottish club side Heart of Midlothian and matches against Eastern Athletic (HK), F.K Austria (Aut) and Ferencvaros (Hun).

Although Joe's success with the national team was limited, his experience in England introduced many new patterns of play and training drills to football in Australia. He conducted hundreds of coaching clinics, wrote countless soccer articles and developed a first class coaching career with Sydney clubs including A.P.I.A, Auburn, Sydney Olympic and Western Suburbs. His influence on the development of the game in Australia, following his return from England can never be underestimated.

With the success of names like Grieves and Mitchell, the 1951 tour of Australia by the English F.A. side saw many of the touring players cast an eye over the local talent. Two such players to fall under the interest of the F.A. and Portmourth club captain Reg Flewin, were Granville's **Eric Hulme** and Queensland's **Bob Laurie**.

Hulme an inside forward was the perfect foil for a tall physical centre forward like Alan Garside at Granville, and some impressive performances against the English F.A. team saw him offered trials in 1952. Impressed with the lad in his first few weeks on trial, Portsmouth settled on a 500 pound transfer fee to the Granville club which thus enabled the struggling club to build seating around Macarthur Park and refurbish their dressing rooms.

Little is know of Hulme's career or why it was that he never made it on to the first team roster, but in late 1953 Hulme surprised the Sydney soccer world when he wandered into Granville training one night demanding a cut of his record transfer fee. In a conciliatory move the Granville club accomodated Hulmes request but he never ever again donned the Magpies strip. In similar circumstances to another formeroo in Peter Wilson, Hulme preferred not to grace a football field again, even though he received many offers to revive his enigmatic career. Deciding not to keep in touch with any of his former friends and teamates, Hulme now lives a virtual recluse on the Central Coast. Even attempts by Studs Up for a 'Formeroo' interview have been declined. The late Queenslander Bob Laurie also spent time on trial with Portsmouth. The half-back fared little better than Hulme and returned to Australia shortly after to continue a lengthy career for club and country.

While Joe Marston and Ken Grieves were making the headlines in England another Socceroo slipped quietly out of Sydney on his way to the U.K. **Cliff Almond**, a left-sided defender for the Cessnock club in Newcastle, embarked on a working holiday to England. Staying with family in Birmingham it didn't take long for Cliff to wander into an Aston Villa training session where he impressed the coaching staff so much, that he made his debut the following week in the starting lineup of the second grade side.

Playing on amateur forms at Villa Park, Cliff decided to continue his holiday into Scotland and ended up in the Scottish town of Stirling. Interest from the local team Stirling Albion saw Cliff relent and finally sign professional forms, taking up a position in the first team squad. He made his debut for Stirling on Christmas Day 1954 against local rivals Aberdeen, going on to make nine first team appearances in the later half of the season. An offer of a transfer to Dundee United for a record fee of 1,000 pounds was offered for the following season, but an illness to his father in Australia saw Cliff return to Australia.

Almond never returned to the U.K. despite offers from Aston Villa, Stirling and Dundee to renew his career. Instead Cliff played out his career with his local club Cessnock going on to make 15 appearances for Australia in a career that lasted until he was 43 years of age.

Another Australian who travelled to England for trials in 1954 was **Colin 'Bruno' Johnston**, father of Craig. Unfortunately for Bruno trials with Preston North End, Aston Villa, Dundee United and Stirling Albion amounted to little and he also returned to Australia.

The success of names like Grieves, Marston, Mitchell and Almond had sparked interest in Australian players and during the later stages of the 1950s many of Australia's more talented players were offered trials with English clubs. **Doug Wendt** a defender with Auburn was one who was offered a written deal with Blackpool, but he ultimately decided to decline the offer. Names **like Charlie Stewart, Ron Lord, Bill Henderson, Alan Garside and Ted Drain** were other players linked with English clubs but sadly none ever made the decision to try their luck abroad.

It was also interesting to note that the 1956 Olympic Games side had four players declared ineligible to play. Both Joe Marston and Cliff Almond received official notification from the Australian Soccer Football Association detailing that they were unavailable for selection in the Socceroo squad because they were considered 'footballing professionals' from their time in England. Australia's other two ex-pats Frank Mitchell and Ken Grieves were also ineligible, but you can't help but wonder what could have been in that series if these four talents had been available for Olympic selection.

Note. An interview with 'Formeroo' Cliff Almond will appear in a forthcoming issue of Studs Up.

Dear Studs Up...

Had a chuckle at "Get the book out" in SU 41where you castigate yourselves for making occasional errors. In adding extra information, you have made another. At least according to my distant memory. It concerns the birth date of Ernie Cambell.

I clearly remember playing against him a number of times in junior under 16 and 18 rep teams in the mid sixties. I was born in 1949. For Ernie to be listed with a birth date of 20-Oct-1941 gives him an extra few years on me and he would have looked very out of place in those under age teams.

So, it looks like a typo to me or your source is in error. Just a little thing, but I couldn't resist asking the question as my tenuous link to the fame of the '74 roos was through Ernie Campbell who I regarded as one of my peers. He went on to "fame and fortune" while the rest of us failed to achieve our adolescent dreams of playing in a World Cup. But then, we are not alone.

Regards, Dave Brown, Queensland

Ed: Good pick-up, Dave! Upon double checking we have confirmed that Ernie was 24 when he went to Germany, so 20/10/49 would be correct. We've since put our source on a red hotplate.

Guess who's coming to Sydney
(and Melbourne and Adelaide and...)

SU takes its periodical look at the progress of the 2000 Olympic Games Qualifying Tournament(s).

Many of the confederations have now completed their preliminaries and have completed the draws for the final qualifying tournaments. So thanks to a load of official and unofficial websites we'll try and squeeze as such info in as we can. Here goes...

AFRICA - 3 or 4 places
Final group draw: **Group A: Uganda, Zimbabwe, Angola, Nigeria**
Group B: Ghana, South Africa, Guinea, Cameroon
Group C: Tunisia, Ivory Coast, Egypt, Morocco
Matches commence October 15-17 and finish on March 24-26 next year. Group winners qualify for the finals. The best runner-up plays off against the Oceania winners between March 17 and May 15 for the final place.

ASIA - 3 places:
Final group draw: **Group A: Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait**
Group B: South Korea, China, Bahrain
Group C: Kazakhstan, Thailand, Japan
Matches commence October 2 and finish on November 13. Group winners qualify for finals.

CONCACAF - 3 places
Still working their way through the preliminaries, with the final qualifying round scheduled to be played in the US from April 21-30 next year. The final round will feature the hosts (**USA**) and five other nations drawn into two groups of three. There will be a round-robin, semi-finals and a final with the third place match deciding the final qualifier.
Before that tournament however there will be a qualifying round featuring three groups, with Mexico, Canada and Bermuda being the seeds. That qualifying round is not scheduled to take place until March/April next year.

Europe - 5 places
Nearing the end of the group phase with the top eight going on to the European Under 21 championships early next year. Among teams in the box seat to qualify for that tournament are **Italy, Norway, Turkey, England** (who won't be here), **Spain, Croatia** and the **Czech Republic**.

South America - 3 places
Just the one qualifying tournament, scheduled for January 18 - February 6 next year. Brazil will host two groups of five with the top two in each group progressing to the final round-robin stage. The top three will qualify for the finals.
The group draw is: **Group A: Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela**
Group B: Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay

Oceania - 0 or 1 place
Group draw: **Group A: Fiji, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga**
Group B: New Zeland, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu
Qualifying tournament to be held in Auckland from December 11-21.

In a concept shamelessly pinched from the Poms' Club 92, Studs Up is proud to announce the opening of the most exclusive club in Oz football

Club 80
(or Club 81, depending on when you read this)

Like most ideas, it all started with a few drinks. And a few stories.
"*So, how many grounds did you make it to back in England?*" someone foolishly asked him.
"About 50 or 60" he said casually.
"*Shit!*" We chorused, "*Good effort, that.*"

And then we told our poor sorry tales, how we'd only visited a dozen or so National Soccer League venues.
"*But that's a fair percentage of 'em*" we offered as a form of apology.
"Really?" exclaimed the incredulous Pom. How many are there?

And then came the stunned silence. We realised we were so ignorant of our own league we didn't even know how many venues NSL soccer had been played at.

Enter stats guru Andrew Howe, and a few others happy to enter the debate, and after careful consideration and a bit of double-checking AH has been able to come up with the definitive list of all venues which have seen NSL action. And of course, the genesis of a constitution (see next page...). If anyone has any queries about the list they should get in touch via the usual avenues on page two and make sure we are aware of any errors before October 10.

So, where will all this end? Well, it may not. Auckland is already making us plan our first name change and there is little doubt that Perth will move soon and Sydney Olympic will no doubt find another six or seven grounds to play at over the next few years. But Studs Up will be satisfied when we manage to track down a full-blown Club 80 member.
If you know of anyone who can top the 40 mark we'd love to hear from you. Failing that, we'd certainly like to compile a list of the 'leaders', as it were, and we're also looking for the leader in each state and territory.

And how these impressive achievements will be officially recognised is also a bit of a mystery at the moment, and we are all ears if anyone out there has any SERIOUS suggestions as to a potential logo. There might just be sew-on patches, you see...
So far we've had a few impressive lists sent through the wires, with an unconfirmed tally of 37 just waiting to be checked. But even if you can't quite match that substantial total, there's always the opportunity to be recognized as a one star or two star member.
And if you're interested in picking up a few bronze points it might be worth considering some useful notes supplied by Peter Smith.

*** Englefield in the far flung Northern suburb of Dural near Hornsby (inexplicably used by Western Suburbs from memory of what Howie told me) and has been levelled for housing development just a couple of years ago. Sydney Sports Ground also gone having been replaced by the SFS. All the other Sydney & Newcastle venues remain. Also Wollongong Showground and Steelers Stadium are most definitely one and the same thing.*

Club 80 - Inaugural Draft Constitution

1. Entry into CLUB 80 is restricted to those who have attended NSL matches at more than one venue.

2. THREE categories of CLUB 80 exist

GOLD - Score is counted as the total number of different venues where you have personally watched a NSL fixture - be it a league or official finals match. The GOLD category is adopted to reward the 'real' NSL fan, especially those who have followed the league for a long time and/or those who make the effort to travel extensively to attend matches. The focus of CLUB 80 is members' scores in this GOLD category.

SILVER - Score is counted as the total number of different venues that you have personally watched any football (soccer) match - whether it be NSL (league and cup), state league, junior, internationals etc. The SILVER category is designed to give credit to those who, along with supporting the NSL to some extent, also support 'grass roots' leagues and who have not necessarily had the opportunity to attend a wide range of NSL fixtures in the past.

BRONZE - Score is counted as the total number of different venues that you have personally visited. A visit is defined by entering the confines of the venue, or physically touching the surrounding boundary (eg. wall, fence) of the venue. Where the venue does now not exist, then presence within the area of the former venue.

Note: The BRONZE category exists to acknowledge members who fall under the GOLD and SILVER categories, but who also adopt the nostalgic (and highly recommended) pastime of visiting former NSL venues which are now not used for footballing purposes.

Warning: Just driving past CLUB 80 venues, or viewing CLUB 80 venues from a plane, is not enough to obtain a point. In such cases a genuine effort must be made to get out of the car or parachute from the plane and touch the actual car park/supermarket/block of flats.

3. One **STAR** is awarded for each ten different venues that have been visited. For example, a member who has attended a NSL match at ten venues has a rank of one star, a member who has attended thirty venues has a rank of three stars, a member who has attended nineteen venues has a rank of 1 star. Seniority is determined purely on ranking, and within ranks, scores.

4. Venues are those defined in the **Official CLUB 80 Venue List**, as at September 1999 (see attachment).

5. The title of CLUB 80 is AMENDED each time a new venue is used to host an NSL fixture: for instance, name will change to CLUB 81 at the commencement of the first Auckland Kings home match.

6. Progress is monitored and other correspondence is recorded, on an ad-hoc base, through the STUDS UP! fanzine and OZSOCCER electronic mailing list.

7. Members encourage other members to strive to increase their scores and rankings.

8. Members are recommened to treat non-members with disrespect and general low regard. Fraternisation, especially close relationships (for example, marriage) between members and non-members is especially discouraged, unless the purpose of that relationship is, for example, to seduce the non-member into attending NSL matches at more than one venue.

9. All suggested amendments will be given due consideration (except if the idea is a dud).

Official Club 80 Venue List
(as at September 1999)

SYDNEY REGION			**MELBOURNE**	
Arlington Oval	13		Chaplin Reserve	73
Belmore Oval	35		Connor Reserve	158
Concord Oval	2		Esther Park	6
Cook Park (Penrith)	24		Fitzroy Cricket Ground	1
Edensor Park	205		Gillon Reserve	1
Englefield Stadium	12		Green Gully Reserve	36
Erskenville Oval	7		Junction Oval	1
Gabbie Stadium	80		Lakeside Stadium	58
Henson Park	11		Middle Park	271
Hurstville Oval	1		Olympic Park (no 1 and 2)	276
Lambert Park	136		Olympic Village	169
Leichhardt Oval	53		Princes Park	23
Marconi Stadium	335		Schintler Reserve	121
Melita Stadium	89		Skinner Reserve	28
North Sydney Oval	15		Somers St Stadium	158
Parramatta Stadium	40		Victoria Park	11
Pratten Park	73		Wembley Park	2
St George Stadium	288		Western Oval	9
Sydney Athletic Field	78			
Sydney Cricket Ground	1		**OTHER VICTORIA**	
Sydney Football Stadium	15		Elcho Park (Geelong)	1
Sydney Sports Ground	31		Kardinia Park (Geelong)	1
Wentworth Park	70		Falcons Park (Morwell)	95
			Shepparton Oval (Shepparton)	1
WOLLONGONG				
Brandon Park	172		**ADELAIDE**	
Dapto Showground	2		Adelaide Oval	3
Steelers Stadium	3		Football Park	1
Towradgi Park	2		Hindmarsh Stadium	407
Wollongong Showgrounds	63		Newton Sports Field	1
Ziems Park	12		Norwood Oval	6
			Olympic Sports Field	154
NEWCASTLE REGION			Richmond Oval	1
Adamstown Oval	29		Thebarton Oval	5
Breakers Stadium	96			
International Sports Centre	87		**BRISBANE REGION**	
Macquane Field (Lake Macquane)	1		Ballymore	1
			Lang Park	59
OTHER NSW			Perry Park	144
Lavington Sports Complex (Albury)	1		Richlands Stadium	105
Graeme Park (Gosford)	2		Spencer Park	78
Oaks Oval (Lismore)	2		Carrara Complex (Gold Coast)	1
Woy Woy Oval (Woy Woy)	1			
			PERTH	
CANBERRA REGION			Perth Oval	41
Bruce Stadium	166		WACA	2
Hawker Oval	2			
Jamison Oval	1			
Manuka Oval	12			
Seiffert Oval (Queanbeyan)	29			

The Studs Up 1999-2000 NSL Preview

If anyone thinks they are going to see sparkling soccer all season, think again This season, which will feature 17 clubs (providing Adelaide Sharks et al make it to at least round 2), 34 rounds and a lot of dud matches The fact that a number of teams hadn't signed 11 players within a month of the opening round says much for the cupboard is bare theory

Somehow, despite the added spice of the World Club Championship to aim at, we can't help feeling a little bit pessimistic about what lay ahead With kids by-passing the NSL and heading straight to Europe we are likely to see the same old faces dominate the competition again although if Mitchell can continue the work at Parramatta that he began at Edensor Park then we may yet see a bolt from the blue Other than that it's difficult to come up with too many surprises

Which means the season is likely to contain the odd boilover and occasional slump in form for most of the clubs, but come next April you can almost bet in which clubs will be challenging for thetop honour

Off the field Perth Glory remain the promotions yardstick for the rest of the league to follow and despite the grumbles that occasionally eminate from the West there is a lot to like about the way they are going about things However for the traditional clubs to think they can follow the same path is just self-delusion

The past has caught up with a few clubs resulting in some frantic re-invention in an attempt to convince an increasingly sceptical marketplace that national league soccer can be a vibrant sort of place to take the family In nine months the axe may well come down on those who have failed to convince

South Melbourne - Business as usual at Bob Jane, except ..

The secret to three-peating may not be what they do in 1999 but what they do in 2000 More precisely in January in Brazil (assuming they get there) Should the club win the Oceania Club Championship we can confidently expect every player to bust his arse to ensure he is in Ange Postecoglou's starting eleven before the jumbo jet takes off but Post Brazil blues may set in

The importance of finishing in the top two can never be underestimated and a home town grand final is becoming something of a pre-requisite for teams with championship aspirations If Souths do well in South America, they may just have the burning desire to qualify for next year's event as well They certainly have the squad to do the job (in Australia, not Brazil) with an army of quality strikers and midfielders although the defence looked shallow at times last season without Blaisis and with Petkovic gone there remains a doubt over the goalkeeping position Should Udvaracz not be up to the task however we can't see the chequebook staying in George Vasilopoulos drawer for long

As long as Trimboli and Clarkson keep playing at Bob Jane they will remain a top six certainty

Northern Spirit - Same again will do nicely, thanks

Having tasted finals action in their first season there seems little doubt the Spirit will be there again Unlike Carlton, who also made the finals in their first year the Spirit have found the right home and thousands of new fans in their first year to send a loud warning around the rest of Sydney Rumours persist of cash-flow problems but how severe can they be when you're pulling 15,000 a fortnight? If the Marketing department can get their act together

Robbie Slater will be the star again in midfield and he'll need to pick up the midfield slack caused by Marusic's departure to Belgium, but the biggest news is the arrival of David Seal who has come 'home' from Northampton after doing the rounds at Bristol City and elsewhere

Perth Glory - Maybe not quite ready for the next step

Having tasted the good life at the end of last season, the league's other 'glamour' team will be determined to go at least one better this term Coach Bernd Stange has brought in Peter Buljan and Kasey Wehrman to replace John Markovski and Michael Garcia although the departure of most of the backline must be a concern Con Boutsianis remains deadly at free-kicks and Bobby Despotovski and Aastan Edwards are also a proven goalscorers so with a quality attack and a dodgy defence Perth Oval may be the place for entertainment this season which is just how boss Nick Tana would like it

Sydney Olympic - Surely won't under-achieve again

The serious under achievers of the 1990s coach Branko Culina should have directed his squad into the finals last year but was pipped in the final round at Adelaide City The Olympic board are unlikely to be please with a repeat performance so expect thunderstorms if the club get off to a poor start Have loads of talent with Zlatko Arambasic returning from Europe to lead the front line alongside Fabio Cordozo Gabriel Mendez will be a star if he can find full fitness while Olyroos Brett Emerton and Lindsay Wilson are the best pair of young full backs in the league Exciting times should be ahead for long-suffering Olympic fans, but we seem to say that sort of thing most years

Adelaide Force - Too much class to miss the finals

Aurelio Vidmar returns to the club and the coach (Zoran Matic) which launched his career way back in the 1980s He will be re-united with Carl Veart and with Damian Mori will from the the most fearsome attacking trio in the league Still strong at the back where Alex Tobin and Jason Petkovic form a formidable spine although midfield as it was last season remains the weakest and most vital link Just made the top six last season but should be a little better this year

Now if they can just convince the Adelaide public that the Zebra has changed its stripes

Marconi - Progress necessary to prevent serious pruning

Frank Farina may gone gone but Eddie Krncevic inherits a talent-packed squad which has the potential to go all the way if Brad Maloney can stay injury-free for the whole season Much is expected from Italian imports Paulo Marchesini and Pierluigi Ligia and if Harry Kewl can be a 20 goal striker then Marconi should improve on last season's fourth A top goalkeeper would make us more positive about that last statement, and the defence in general still has question marks despite the presence of Socceroos Dominic Longo and Mark Babic But if Vlado Zoric can become the midfielder we know he can be and veteran Francis Awantele continues to cause problems up front the newly re-imaged Stallions may surprise ever themselves

The club have made much mileage of their increased marketing budget but nothing attracts punters like winners and the Stallions may well have been better off spending that money on the playing staff To miss the finals would invite some serious pruning at the end of the season

Carlton - New home, new coach, new squad,

Olympic Park will see new tenants which have recruited quantity although quality remains a question mark Not so with Stuart Slater who SC confidently predicts will finish the season with a nomination for the Player of the Year award While Moreira scored goals last season he failed to deliver against the top clubs and his strike-rate against quality defences will be a key John Markovski should be a welcome return but niggling doubts linger over his departure 12 months ago Expect fireworks if the Blues are struggling by Christmas

Plenty of height at the back courtesy of Douglas and MacPherson will serve them well and midfielder Steve Martin seems ready to break through to provide the enthusiasm supplied previously by Marco Bresciano and Vince Grella A disappointment if they miss the finals again

Parramatta Power – Another Spirit waiting to happen?

A controversial birth perhaps but on playing and coaching strength alone the club must be considered top six material Having recruited most of Sydney United's squad has provided a solid base to work with, while Milan Blagojevic will add extra passing ability and experience in midfield. How the public takes to the NSL's other newest franchise may have an effect on performances as well – it's a lot easier having played in front of 15 000 each week when it comes to finals time The hype has provided a double-edged sword One is reminded of the fanfare that greeted Carlton's entry into the league – and there are a number of other similarities which means that a grand final spot in their first year is not totally out of the question. But it is highly unlikely even with the likes of Sterjovski and Griffiths up front

Brisbane – Having trouble reversing that downward spiral

So, this is the club that won the national championship a mere 28 months ago! While the club may take pride in the development of Frank Farina as a coach, it remains an indictment on the club's administration that the club is facing an uphill battle to stay competitive this season With various retirements from the board there is perhaps an opportunity for a fresh start but who is best qualified to take the reins is debatable

There have been rumours of a return to Perry Park although Suncorp remains their home for now and the squad will suffer badly from the departures of Chyroos Wehrman and ...aybutt Kosmina will need to work a miracle for Brisbane with young Sinkeleis if they are to make the top six

Wollongong Wolves – Mediocrity beckons again

Have made the finals just once in the past six years and it is difficult to see them improving on that record this season No starling moves in the transfer market means the Wolves will rely on a similar looking squad to the one which struggled to finish ninth last season Matt Horsley remains the heart and soul of the team but he will need major help from Scott Chipperfield Anthony Surjan and Robert Stanton if a season of mediocrity is to be avoided

And an improvement in their away from wouldn't go astray either

Auckland Kings – The one real wild card in the pack

Bit of a mixed bag across the Tasman with a tendency to pick up Kiwis who have seen NSL action rather than experienced NSL veterans which leads one to be suspicious about their ambitions for their first year The travel to Auckland alone will worry some clubs and if they can attract a vocal crowd they should have little trouble earning enough points to finish above the bottom four After that it is tougher and one suspects that unless three or four Kiwi internationals such as Rito Van Steeden, Gavin Wilkinson and goalkeeper Jason Batty really play above themselves then the Kingz may struggle to make a serious impact in their inaugural year On top of that their still appears to be serious cracks in the off-field arrangements which may not bode well for the immediate future

Sydney United – Should strugg e but we've said that before

Have been raped and pillaged by new boys Parramatta Power and are favourites to go broke but the critics and cynics all said that last year as well yet they managed to defy everyone by winning the minor premiership and then narrowly losing the grand final

Eddy Bosnar from Northern Spirit is a good pick up and Tom Pondeljak will provide the spark in midfield, but it's difficult to see the Pumas in the top six come May Losing fourteen players in one hit is surely just too much of a body blow?

Melbourne Knights – Consolidation before progress?

It looks like a season of struggle ahead for the Knights and their new-look committee with their Blue Ribbon Cup form proving that life will be less creative without Tom Pondeljak around Joe Gesic will be relying on Ivan Kelic to do the bulk of the scoring in the absence of another recognised goalscorer while at the other end the imminent departure of Joe Didulica may also spell trouble

Martin John is a fine young 'keeper and Brandon Vassallo and Martin Collins have been trialing but it is a big step up from Premier League to NSL, as Jason Vukadin as others discovered last season Ramsford Banks will need to play at his very best and Anta Deak and Ivan Jolic will be expected to take the next step as well Even if things go reasonably well, mid-table at best

Newcastle Breakers – The future looks rosy (again...)

Another provincial club which has struggled to make a serious dent on the league in recent years Since Lee Stanley took over last year however the club has shown tangible signs of improvement Had the best defensive record outside the top six last year but a lightweight attack restricted their ambitions The club continues to unearth loads of young talent with Greg Owens one in particular to look out for and Travis Dodd (Adelaide City) is another although the loss of Robert Shannon could prove telling Like other clubs, if a recognised scorer can be found

Gippsland Falcons – The future looks bleak (again...)

With the axe waiting to be swung next June there are plenty of people around who will tell you that this will be the Falcons last year Have failed to mount a serious challenge over the past four years and can't really claim to be in a position to warrant a place in the 'new' NSL scheduled to kick-off in 2000 01

Have had their growth and player-drawing power stunted by a large-scale overdraft and until the debt is wiped out there seems little scope for the club to make significant advancement Mehmet Durakovic will be a huge asset at the back provided his transfer is approved Sandy Robertson from Dundee Utd could be a good buy but there is an overall lack of class which prevents us from predicting anything other than a season of struggle Not the worst though

Canberra Cosmos – Is their future elsewhere?

Had a respectable second half of last season when Tom Sermanni stabilised a rudderless ship but by then the damage was done Simply don't have the resources to compete with the bigger clubs and will figure prominently in discussion re 2[IN] division for 2000/01 Striker Peter Buljan is a bad loss and much will be needed from quality recruits Jason Polak Alex Castro and Daniel Watkins if the Cosmos are to avoid a long hot summer Ivan Zelic and Lindsay Wilson are the other major losses

Adelaide Sharks – Do they have a future?

Have tried to re-invent themselves in a variety of ways over the close season in an attempt to appease the creditors and ignite a disinterested public with talk of links with Manchester United and other fairy-tales But to be honest the club have only succeeded in entertaining the cynics with a soap opera worthy of prime-time television whilst confusing their own staff and fans while they're at it. Plenty of significant departures while recruits are little more than cast-offs Strong rumours persist over their ability to last the season And start it

Interview with a Formeroo

Greg Stock has a lengthy one with Max Tolson

When Australia came into the dressing rooms at half time in the second leg World Cup Qualifier against Iran in Teheran the Socceroos backs were literally to the wall In front of over 100 000 screaming Iranians the Socceroos had seen their slender first leg lead whittled away in just half an hour Coach Rale Rasic was desperate His forwards had lacked the courage and intensity in the opening stanza and he knew he had to do something quickly otherwise the Socceroos were in real danger of being overrun

Rasic went to his bench and in what seemed like a perplexing move, he unleashed the tall domineering frame of Max Tolson to replace the tiring Adrian Alston During the next 45 minutes the Australian side gritted its teeth and hung on desperately Putting the Iranian goalkeeper into the back of the net early on and then harrassing the Iranian midfield with some hard tackling Tolson was outstanding In what is largely considered his finest footballing moment Tolson continually inspired his tiring teammates with his hard running physical style as Australia held onto their slender lead and moved through to the next phase, a two legged showdown with South Korea

Rasic knew his players and their style and knew very well about the physical attributes of Max Tolson The move had been a success and another chapter in the history of the '74 team had been written As a teenager Tolson had been a creative left sided midfielder but by the time he was 21 South Coast United coach Jim Kelly had switched the quietly spoken lad to centre forward It was there that Tolson quickly made a name for himself as a physical and domineering type who showed little regard for life and limb His only focus was the ball and giving his side a strong physical presence on the forward line and with it came the goals and lots of them

In 1966 Tolson was offered trials with English club side Workington. In what is a largely forgotten story in Australian soccer history Tolson became one of only a handful of Australians to have played professional football in England up to that point In a highly successful two year stint there Tolson earned many friends and admirers within the small third division club before returning to Australia and resuming his club career with his old club Safeway United formerly South Coast United)

A high profile move to Marconi for two seasons in the early seventies alongside friend and Socceroo teammate Peter Wilson saw Tolson pushed into the national spotlight where a call up for the Socceroos followed Rasic recognised the talents of the hardworking forward who had combined a strong physical presence with some deft ball skills to become one of the most feared strikers in the game What followed was a once in a lifetime opportunity a trip to the World Cup Finals in Germany as part of Australia's most well regarded football side the '74 World Cup team

Studs Up managed to track the quietly spoken former striker down at his caravan park on the New South Wales Central Coast With his family Max runs a thriving business where the only things to worry him these days are the local wildlife and a 'dicky knee' courtesy of the bumps of big-time football In an SU exclusive interview I enjoyed an hour long chat with the quietly spoken ex striker and started off by asking just how his love of soccer first started

Max Tolson "I was born in Wollongong but when I was six months of age Mum and Dad moved to Lismore It was all rugby league there and I used to watch it as a kid We came back to Balgownie (in Wollongong) when I was eight and I started playing junior soccer there
We were living with my grandmother and I asked her where the park was I went down to the park and they were kids playing this different looking game I wanted to get involved and one of the coaches there asked me if I would like a game on the wing. I said yes and the ball came to me I picked it up and scored a try and nobody touched me (laughing) It all started from there and I just thought (this game) was better "

Greg Stock Did you always play your junior football as a centre forward?
MT "I played left half and inside left in those days and as time went on I probably moved more into supporting the forwards in midfield I then went on to playing for the school (Later) they were calling for third graders at South Coast United as under sixteens and I was a year less but I went out for a trial and was picked at left half Staying at South Coast United I went up to second grade
Then a man by the name of Jimmy Kelly came along (as coach) I was playing left half and there were a few disputes with a couple of the 'Poms they had up front and he picked me one day in midfield at the age of eighteen for the last three games of the comp There were a few games to go in the competition and we were in the top four and I moved in at halfback on the left side I suppose its history now but we went onto win the Grand Final in front of 34 000 people at the old Sports Ground "

GS That must have been a big occassion to a young eighteen year old in front of 34 000 with a team of 'name' players around Jim Kelly
MT "You don't realise how big it was! It was exciting just to play with these guys I used to watch them after our reserve game and think I'd love to do that and next minute your shoved in there, having a ball kicking everything above the grass (laughing) "

GS How big an influence was it to have guys in your team of the calibre of Mike Johnson Jimmy Kelly Graham Barnett and John Doherty all seasoned English players?
MT "They were great players I knew that their time had finished in England but they were still good players Everyone was raving about the Sydney European players coming out (Baumgartner Sagis Jaros etc) but we were winning Those players just seemed another decade away as if it was not possible to play with them
Barry Salisbury was another who was an Aussie but he must be one of the most talented sportsmen the South Coast has ever produced and a great man He could play cricket, golf soccer and do anything A good guiding man who would whisper in your ear People don't know how much I used to look up to Barry Salisbury He was a school teacher and when I was in third grade I used to look up to him when he was playing for Canterbury and think I'd like to do that "

GS You mention a bit of a generation gap between yourself and the Johnson's, Kelly's and Barnett's
MT "I was eighteen and they were in their thirties so there was more than a generation Kelly stayed for a couple of years and then went back to England I carried on playing and he organised for me to go to Workington and set it all up for me "

GS Going overseas to play in England was very rare for an Australian It must have been a highlight in a great career for you
MT "You always had visions of wondering how you would go overseas Kelly just bought it up not long before he was going (back to England) He left and organised a club He never had to do what he did but what a great man He took a job at a third division club as a trainer and that was going backwards for him but didn't realise it at the time he did that for solely for myself

was very inexperienced and very green. He was used to playing with the likes of Stanley Mathews and enjoying the quality things in life. He was a gentleman and he didn't just teach you about soccer he taught you about life. One of his sayings to me, when he told me I was plucked out of second grade to play first grade and I looked in disbelief he said "You come dressed as if you are a soccer player. Look like one"

was an apprentice butcher at the time and for me to spend a weeks wages plus on a suit a jacket tie and slacks was outrageous. I was a jeans guy and one of the boys in thongs. I told my mother and father and we went out shopping and bought some nice expensive clothes. My biggest problem was liked it. We went to lunch before a match and liked that. I was getting into the dressing rooms without my mates seeing me dressed like this (laughing)."

GS *So it was just bringing a bit of professionalism into the game then.*
MT "He not only bought his abilities as a coach but also professionalism to the club."

GS *So that just didn't rub off on the players but the administrators as well.*
MT "I think we were all richer for his input in the few years he was there (at South Coast United). Everyone liked him the fans, the media, the players."

GS *Was Jimmy Kelly the coach who swapped you from left half-back to the forwards?*
MT "It was the next year when we won the competition first past the post. There was a guy by the name of John Doherty and John was a pretty player to watch and very skilful. He wasn't renowned as a hard worker where Kelly was looking for a bit of both. He saw John had the talent and the ability but Jim was the boss and I didn't realise until later when all this erupted but John wasn't keen to work and wanted the ball at his feet all the time. Next minute Kelly told me I was playing centre-forward.
Well it was'nt for me to argue because was still in the team. I was getting twenty one pound a week where my main wage was only about the same. I wasn't going to complain as I was an apprentice butcher in my fifth year. For me to be offered twenty one quid a week for a win when I had to work six days a week for less for something like 55 hours, for a game of soccer on the weekend, something loved was big money. I really don't remember my first game up front but I scored a goal. I was young and fit and I worked hard and chased and chased. I got some publicity, some adverse."

GS *When you say adverse publicity - more for your robust style to the game?*
MT "I don't know about style. I think the supporters liked my style and the coach. I think it was the opposition and some reporters saw it as being a bit too aggressive."

GS *But this was back at a time where you could be robust and physical.*
MT "What they say today is you can't be tackled from behind, as it's a send-off offence if its too serious. In those days you could be chopped from behind and as long as the ball went somewhere it was okay. Just thought it was part of controlled aggression. never did anything too outrageous. I whacked a couple of guys now and again but I got spat on and kicked in the back of the heels."

GS *As the focal point for the attack you would be targeted every week?*
MT "Oh sure and always kicked and chopped from behind. I've had four cartilage operations and a medial ligament operation and you don't get those from being tackled in front. It's always from being chopped from behind and you don't get any sympathy votes when you're in hospital for weeks on end. It didn't bother me and you become wiser and protect yourself as you go along."

GS *Your experience in England with Workington. You made 31 appearances (6 goals, in over two years of football.*
MT "I played two half seasons. It was an experience alright. I turned up in England and went to my club with a clearance but I didn't play for about four weeks. My club hadn't organised a release through FIFA.
Why? I don't know and I still don't know to this day but it did finally come around. I took my Australian boots over but they weren't nearly as good for the English conditions which was just mud. It was the middle of winter and just mud. Playing with these Australian boots where the studs weren't very long, I couldn't stay on my feet. My performance wasn't really that impressive (in my first game) but I managed to score a goal towards the end and we won 2-1.
I learnt later that in England if you do nothing in the whole game but still score and score the winning goal then it's acceptable. But it was very hard to adapt for a while since I was pushed up front and I didn't really want to play there."

GS *Was that Jimmy Kelly again using you as a centre-forward?*
MT "Yes but I had my ideas why. I don't know if it was the best club to go to but Jim organised it and I went there, but maybe it was lack of ability and experience but I think it had a lot to do with the people I was playing with whose careers were finished. It was very hard to get decent quality supply. They were more interested at a third division club in holding on to their position and wages so you wouldn't always get the ball when you wanted it. A lot of times it would be after there was nothing else on, someone would toss it up. What can you do? I was playing with a struggling club and I was up front all by myself and not used to the conditions and not as mobile as some of the blokes you're training with each day.
I was never gifted with lightning speed, there were always blokes faster than me, but was good in the air and that got me through a lot. But after a few months in England you do pick up a yard or two (in pace). I realised that when I came back, because there were some players couldn't compete with as far as speed was concerned but when I came back I could and in some cases was probably a bit sharper. It didn't take too long going back to a full time job and part time soccer (in Australia) to lose that speed."

GS *Were you training full-time as a professional at Workington, five or six days a week?*
MT "Yes. It all depends on how cranky the manager got (laughing). We were at his disposal. Twice a day training but Sundays was usually a break and if you were doing well in the league and training, well you might get a Monday or a day during the week off. You were always pleased to go to the ground. We didn't start till 10am and finish around 12.
It was always good training with the boys with the apprentices looking after your gear a hot bath waiting for you after training with your clothes laid out for you on a hook all cleaned and dried."

GS *It would have been a wonderful experience coming from a semi-professional club in Australia.*
MT Absolutely. It was great. The apprentices trained with you but they were after your position as well. The town I was in was good and I was well known. An Australian moving into the area and everyone wanted to be your friend."

Next issue Part 2 of Greg Stock's interview when Max talks about the 1974 squad, his relationship with Rale Rasic and the time he rolled Jimmy Kelly's car into a ditch!

Aussies in Germany

Andre Kruger tracks down Levent Osman - on trial in Hannover

In a German news paper I read " *One of Australia's finest Soccer Players, the Player of the Year Levant Osman, is on trial with Hanover 96*"

Oops, every Aussie who comes over to Germany is the best and a Player of the Something I think it's because of their managers - if they want to sell someone they tell the Press stories like that because they want to push the price up

On that day Hanover was due to play a friendly against a team from the 6th League and they want to see how strong Levant is. He gets special permission to play for 96. So I drove around 50 kilometres to meet up with him and snap a few words

The game started on a nice ground near a forest in front of 1400 people. The local village made a big deal of the game and at every corner you could buy home-made cakes and sausages from the old slaughterhouse and there was also a lottery - big business for the people who live there

But there was no Osman on the field! At half time 96 were 3-0 in front and I walked to the Hanover bench and it was empty no. there was a lonely guy on it with a Gippsland Falcon jersey. I walked over he saw my Aussie cap - and I put a smile on his face. I sat down, told him my name and we shook hands. I said it was nice to have him here and explained how he was the first Aussie in Hanover. I started with my questions how and why he arrived here

Andre Krueger Did you impress the coach?
Levent Osman He said that I am a good player and he wanted to see me playing
A K but you're not on the field today!?
L O. its because of the papers. The Falcons sent a fax today but we needed another one from the Australian Soccer Federation (his words). It s not here yet
A K How did came to Hanover?
L O. I was on a trial in Scotland. I impressed the coach there but I got no work permit
so I moved to Germany to visit *Tony Sekulic in Mainz. I played with him* back *in Australia*
I stayed in his flat for *two weeks and he said I* should *ask Hanover for a trial*
A K What do you think about Hannover and the team?
L O Its a very good team. Last season they needed only one point more to get to the first Division. I like the town and the weather is also beautiful (hmm, I will ask about the weather again when the summer is over)
A M You travelled a lot are you not homesick?
O L. Oh no my home is were I live doesn't matter where
reminded him what he said about soccer in Australia when he was in Turkey and close to get a contract with Trabzonspor (see SU 37)
L O. (laughs) The situation is a little bit better now to earn money with Soccer Down Under but I want to play for a European professional Team (its still the dream from every player)

The second half began so I moved off. Hanover won easily 7-0. After the game I wished him good luck and told him to get in contact again. His chance to stay in Hanover? I think 70-30 %

told him that I spoke to Sekulic a few months ago and that interview was printed in Studs Up and Inside Soccer. Levent told me that he knows Inside Soccer - "a very new magazine" and he heard a little bit about SU. He said the biggest magazine downunder is Soccer Australia. I told him because of my stories that may be change in the future!"

Friday two days later I walked to a training session from the Team. He was still with them and he waved to me. After the training I asked him for some news

L O We had a training game today in the morning, 9 vs 9 players and we won 5-2. I scored once
A K Now that you have been with the team in camp for five days, tell me something about the differences to training in Australia
L O We had twice a day training, 10am and 3pm and it was very hard. Running, tackling and so on a hard program. Now I have my playing papers together but there are no friendly matches anymore (there was a two week break because of the national team playing some Euro 2000 qualifiers)
A K and the coach? Do you understand him?
L O He is very nice, he is talking Croatian, and the translator German so I understood nothing. I got some help from Cherundolo, he is from the USA, but at the moment he is away for an international against Jamaica
A K The Olyroos beat Southampton, do you have dreams of playing in the Olympics?
L O Yes, but no one asked me to play yet, that's why I urgently need a club to show my skills

I told him that Hanover is close to buying another player a German forward. Levent was shocked a bit worried about not getting a contract. So I asked the coach Branko Jankovic, an assistant coach with Croatia at the World Cup in France, if he wanted Osman. He said that the club would have to pay around 50 000 Aussie bucks, which is not expensive for a man like him but he wanted to check him a few days in the

told Levent to give it his best, he is close, very close to be the first Australian in Hanover and the second division is the best place to start. The first division is another world. I gave him the example of David Zdrilic. Last year he was one of the best players, now he is only a reserve. I felt that his chance for a contract was 50-50

A few days later I had a break from work and drove again to the training ground. There was nothing more about Osman in the newspapers, so I was a bit concerned I may not see him again, but he was still there

They had a training match, also with the new German forward. A player from Bosnia and a black man with Rastafarian dreadlocks from Guinea was there for a trial, and he played damned good. I had just a half hour to watch, no chance to talk to Levent. He played very nervously and kicked the ball twice up to the sky. I listened to a few visitors who watched the session and they said, " You would have to be a kangaroo to get the ball"

I walked to Mr Thomas von Heesen (* see below), manager of Hannover for a few months (he previously managed Arminia Bielefeld and he bought Milosevic and Foxe during his time there). I asked him about Osman, while another black player was waiting near us, he also asked to join in the training session

Thomas von Heesen *This and tomorrow morning is the last check for Levent. I want to get together with our coach and we want to think about whether to sign him or not. Now it's also a question if we want to offer a contract to some of the other new players. Nothing is clear now "*
He asked me if I knew something about Milosevic and I answered him only that he has a long contract. I don't want a high talented player like him sitting on the bench in Hannover!
Back to Osman, his chance today? Hope I am wrong, but I think 30 - 70 %

** Thomas von Heesen - Hamburg 1980-94 (368 gms 99 gls) and Bielefeld 96-97 (10 / 1)*

24 hours later, I am on the highway, a short break from work. I drive fast through the city to catch Levent, if he is there, before training starts at 9.30 that morning. He is coming out of the cabin from the big Niedersachsen Stadium, three minutes walk to the exercise ground.

A.K.: Good morning Levent, do you have any news about a contract?
L.O.: Hi, no news, they asked me to stay two days longer and that was two days ago.
A.K.: The manager told me that they want to make a decision today. It's not a easy situation for you at the moment, is it?
L.O.: No, it's in my brain every second. I feel that I am also a bit nervous at training and that's not so good.
I told him not to get nervous, there is still a chance. So if he gave it his best, than it would be okay. It's not the last chance in his young life, but it's a good omen if the coach wanted him to stay one week with the club. He told me that the two good players from yesterday had gone, 96 needed no more forwards.
After five minutes, the training started and I had to go back to work. We have to wait another day. Don't know why, but today I give him ten percent more to stay, 40 - 60%.

Hannover 96 has a game in Offenbach, the new team in the League. Shortly before the team left for the southern German city, I drove to the Hotel. There was a short training session, a dinner and now they are ready to go. I saw Levent...

L.O.: Hi, still no news. I am going with the team to Offenbach to watch the game. I don't feel bad, I have a good feeling. At the moment my manager is talking to the club manager and I hope they make a decision today, we will see. I have been here over a week and I want to stay here more and more.

After a few minutes I have to go. I gave him my address and told him I would visit him again in the coming days, hopefully as a member of Hannover 96. His chances now? I don't know, I am a bit confused about these kinds of tactics to sign a player. I went back to Hamburg for three days to wait and see what's coming next...

Monday, back from Hamburg and no news in the papers. So I called the 96 office to ask.

" Osman? No he is gone, he's got no contract." Why? "Oh, don't know. Maybe you call later to ask the right person".
No thank you. So I went to the training ground to find someone who can answer my questions. I saw the players, everything is still the same, but no Levent. I found Ivankovic and he said "We checked Levent for more than a week and I liked him very much, but he had to do a job here and for that, overall, he is not strong enough. We are looking for another player for this position and we've also bought a new guy from West Africa, so we need the foreign place."
I feel sorry for Mr. Osman. He wants to try his luck in another town, maybe in Germany, maybe in England. It doesn't seem fair to have him a week and then to say no. Young man, Football is business, not more and not less.

Olyroos (non) Update

Unfortunately space has become too tight to include the details of the Olyroos recent trip to England where they clubbed Southampton 4-1 and drew 1-1 with the Kuwaiti under 23s.
Rest assured we'll bring you the relevant info next issue.
Oh, And that goes for the Joeys trip to Bahrain as well.

1999 NSW Super League – Finals Series

Preliminary Semi Final – Saturday, July 10
Blacktown City 3 — Damien Smith (2), Aaron Holst
Macarthur Rams 1 — Eric Williams

Elimination Semi Final – Sunday, July 11
Parramatta Eagles 3 — Grant Bard, Anthony Panzarino, Adam Anderson
Bankstown City 0

1st Semi Final – Tuesday, July 20
Macarthur Rams 2 — Eric Williams (2)
Parramatta Eagles 3 — Grant Bard pen, George Wakim, Anthony Panzarino

2nd Semi Final – Sunday, July 18
Bonnyrigg White Eagles 2 — Joe Brun, Dave Harding
Blacktown City Demons 5 — Damien Brown, Damien Smith, Jon Angelucci, Aaron Holst, Stuart Cleary

Preliminary Final – Sunday, July 25, Gabie Stadium 3pm
Parramatta Eagles 3 — Baltamobou Conde, Grant Bard (2)
Bonnyrigg White Eagles 2 — R Younis, Benjamin Green

Grand Final – Sunday, August 1 [illegible]
Blacktown City Demons 8 — Damien Brown (2), Jon Angelucci (2), Stuart Cleary
Parramatta Eagles 1 — Mark Revely

Gold Medal Voting
33 – Peter Preston (Central Coast)
31 – Damian Borg (Fairfield Bulls)
28 – Robbie Gomez (Bonnyrigg White Eag l
26 - Craig Sharpley (Ryde City)
24 - Zolu Adioslu (Bankstown City)
24 - Damien Foxe Blacktown City
24 - Craig Hobbs (Sutherland)

Top Scorers (regular season only)
17 - Damian Borg (Fairfield Bulls)
17 - Grant Bard (Parramatta Eagles)
16 – Colin Luff (Bonnyngg White Eagles)
15 – Mark Hoenselaars (Fairfield Bulls)
14 – Jason Bennett (Blacktown City)
10 – Steve Karavatakis (Leichhardt Tigers)
10 – Jon Angelucci (Blacktown City)
10 – Robert Gomez (Bonnyngg White E.)

Under 21 Player of the Year Daniel Farias (Sutherland)
Under 18 Player of the Year Ali Chahine (Eastern Suburbs)
Goalkeeper of the Year John Crawley (Macarthur Rams)
Coach of the Year John Turner of Bonnyrigg

The Super League Team of Champions for 1999: John Crawley, Dion Valle, Mark Racker, Paul O'Grady, Damien Foxe, Matthew Lowe, Paul Richardson, Craig Sharpley, Grant Bard, Damian Borg and Robert Gomez.

Fair Play Award Parramatta Eagles
Club Champions Parramatta Eagles
Referee of the year Con Dioms
And a special congratulations to Journalist of the Year Paul Goodwin (Super Soccer) - a SU subscriber! Well done sir!

David Carty & Peter Forsyth Memorial Charity Cup

Hate to say this but this pre-season series was treated about as seriously as it's sister event in Victoria -- by the media and the fans. Another example of the public being duped so many times in the past they don't bother going even when there is something worth seeing.
How long will it take to undo the years of damage? Only tell will tell, but in the meantime this stuff has to be recorded so...

August 15
Canberra Cosmos 3 — Danny Burt, Ivo De Jesus, Gabriel Gonzales
Blacktown 2 — Peter Sermanni, Stuart Cleary

Bonnyrigg 1 — Hassan Kdouh
Parramatta 4 — Adam Anderson, Mark Reveley, George Wakim (2)

August 22 (at Breakers Stadium)
Northern Spirit 2 — Luke Casserley 2pen, Tony Faria 88
Newcastle Breakers 0

August 23 (at Marconi Stadium)
Marconi 6 — Darren McDonald 26, Paolo Marchesini 36, 44, Francis Awaritefe 79, Harry Karl 82, 85
Canberra Cosmos 1 — Alex Castro 90

August 23 (at Marconi Stadium)
Sydney Olympic 2 — Jim Bakis 25, Chris Kalantzis 65
Parramatta Eagles 1 — Eelis Conde 67

(at Sydney Utd Sports Centre)
Sydney Utd 0
Wollongong 2 — Scott Chipperfield 6, Matt Horsley 72pen

Semi Finals
August 29 (double header at Marconi)
Northern Spirit 0
Wollongong Wolves 1 — Essa Mesi 18

Marconi 1 — Dominic Longo
Sydney Olympic 1 — Pablo Cardozo
Sydney Olympic won 5-4 on penalties

3rd place play-off
September 19 (at Parramatta Stadium) - 3pm
Marconi 1
Northern Spirit 1

Grand Final
September 19 (at Parramatta Stadium) – 5pm
Wollongong 2 — Noel Spencer 32, Scott Chipperfield 59
Sydney Olympic 1 — Gabriel Mendez 24
Referee: Matthew Breeze
Attendance: about 1500

Pre-season competitions are littered with booby-traps for players and fans alike, with dodgy venues, dodgy surfaces and even dodgier fast food. Nevertheless SU ventured out to sample the offerings at the

1999 Blue Ribbon Cup

Soccer, winter, Victoria. The product of those elements has never been pretty, and when you throw in the added ingredient of pre-season it is little wonder that there were only a couple of hundred on site when the opening game of the 1999 Blue Ribbon Cup kicked off.

For those that haven't had their ears to the ground over the winter, the Blue Ribbon Cup is the successor to the Tynan-Eyre Cup, with the Blue Ribbon bit about to become an annual event in the same way that Red Noses highlight SIDS. It was expected that at least a few hundred policemen might attend (is that why the fans stayed away?!?), but it seems the round-robin based competition made as much impact on the law as it did on the general public and the media.

Which was a pity really ,because it's not often you get the chance to see double-headers in Melbourne, and the bonus this year was that South Melbourne were taking it VERY seriously with the Oceania Club Championship just on the horizon. Well, a bit closer than that, actually.

In a remarkable display of stupidity, the final of the Blue Ribbon Cup was scheduled for September 19 at Bob Jane Stadium, with Souths no doubt hoping to boost membership sales and so on. Suddenly South Melbourne realised they would in fact be in Fiji at that time, having already played their opening match in the OCC.

South Melbourne promptly announced that Bob Jane Stadium would be unavailable for the final as they wanted to give their ground time to recover (how stupid do they think we are?) Mild panic ensued at the VSF as they suddenly had the dual problems of no venue and no 'fourth' team. Eventually it was decided to hold the final back where it all started, at Bulleen, with the bottom placed team (Gippsland) taking on Melbourne Raiders, after options as diverse as Premier League XI and a VIS team coached by Simon Colosimo were canvassed.

As for the on-field action, the first two rounds proved that South Melbourne and Carlton are likely to finish in the top half while Melbourne Knights and Gippsland will not. While it is acknowledged that the clubs were at differing points in their preparation, the class difference was tangible and we can see nothing but struggle ahead for Biskic's Knights and Hopkins' Falcons.

Week 1 – August 29 at Veneto Club, Bulleen
Knights 1 Falcons 0; South 1 Carlton 0

Week 2 – September 5 at Epping Soccer Stadium
Carlton 3 Falcons 0; South 5 Knights 1

Week 3 – September 12 at Falcons Park, Morwell
Melbourne Knights 2 Carlton 1; South Melbourne 3 Gippsland 0

Week 4 – September 19 at Veneto Club, Bulleen
Final: Carlton 1 (Lapsansky) Knights 0

Did that REALLY happen?

AUGUST

11 – The Parramatta Sun reports that Sydney United president Marco Franovic is looking for compensation over Parramatta Power's alleged poaching of players, using the terms "disgraceful" and "unethical" to describe the recruiting process. A six-figure sum is being considered.

13 – Matildas coach Greg Brown resigns just 13 months before the Olympic Games.

"I have not been happy in the job for the past few months and after the team's poor showing at the recent World Cup in the US I feel it would be better if someone else took over," he said. Assistant coach Chris Tanzey will fill in on a caretaker basis, but somehow we don't think we've heard the last of this one...

22 – Parramatta Power have their first serious hitout with a 2-1 win over Macarthur Rams. For the record, Milan Blagojevic scores the club's first official 'friendly' goal.

25 – Glasgow Rangers lose to Parma 0-1 but qualify for the Champions League, which IS relevant because there were twice as many Aussies playing for Rangers as there were Scots!

26 – Joe Marston is inducted into the New South Wales Sporting Hall of Fame at a ceremony at Homebush. Interesting to note that Joe was inducted into the Australian Hall of Fame nearly a decade ago. Makes you wonder what the hold up at state level was...

27 – After a year's absence Joe Simunic makes an appearance for Hamburg as a substitute in their league match against Schalke.

29 – Hoots mon! The Melbourne Knights announce that they will play in the famous green and white hoops of Celtic, in an obvious attempt to attract half of Melbourne's Scots to Somers St. Should be a REAL hoot if Viduka transfers mid-season...

SEPTEMBER

1 – A night of low-key friendlies in Melbourne sees Carlton cruise past Oakleigh 4-2, while South Melbourne destroy Port Melbourne 11-1, with Jim Tsekinis, Vaughan Coveny and Michael Curcija all notching hat-tricks.

8 – FIFA announces a deal with Brazilian company Traffic International which will see FIFA pocket 60 million Swiss Francs for the broadcasting rights for the World Club Championship to the held in Brazil next January. Which equates to, um, lots of Aussie dollars.

9 – English club QPR is thrown into turmoil when it is discovered that George Kulcsar has contracted a form of viral meningitis. Fortunately, it isn't the bacterial strain. Nevertheless QPR's upcoming match against Sheffield United is postponed as a precaution. Back home, it is revealed that Southampton have purchased the WA based academy formerly owned and operated by West Ham United.

10 – Soccer Australia and Ericsson issue a joint press release announcing the cessation of Ericsson's sponsorship of the naming rights to the NSL, although NSL General Manager Stefan Kamasz is quick to point out: *"Soccer Australia's relationship with Ericsson over recent years has been very positive and we are happy that an ongoing relationship with Ericsson will be maintained"*. Exactly what 'maintained' means isn't divulged.

Meanwhile Mark Schwarzer has reconsidered his temporary retirement from international soccer after having a few words with Frank Farina. Perhaps it was the thought of facing Brazil in November?

16 – South Melbourne make history by becoming the first club from Melbourne to defeat a club team from the Solomon Islands on Fijian soil. And they have to come from behind to do it.

19 – Brisbane City take out the (deep breath) Queensland Soccer Federation Premier League Grand Final with a 1-0 win over Gold Coast City.

BuLLeTIN BOARd

Congratulations Perth Glory....

for producing a yearbook that would not be out of place at any club in the world. A4 in size, 88 pages, full glossy colour, complete stats (including line-ups of the opposition!) and stacks of articles and profiles and so on and so on.

At $9.95, '**Cover Story 3**' is fantastic value.

Reward the club and the publishers. Buy it.

FREE DOWNLOADS FOR OZ SOCCER COMPUTER FREAKS

Follow the 1999-2000 Ericsson Cup, Oceania Club Championship, Under 17s World Cup and other assorted competitions by downloading the free McRopod Concepts Sports System which you can find on the Download page on the McRopod Concepts site:

www.planet.net.au/~mcropod

It's a MS Excel file which can be read from Versions 5.0 on up and has all the usual features which allow you to enter your predicted scores to see what'll happen, then vary them with the actual results as they come in. Alan Clark has done a great job on these and he invites club administrators to get in touch about the use of them.

So,what are you waiting for?

CLUB NOTES

South Melbourne are holding their Season Launch and Player Guernsey Night at 'Albert on the Park' on Friday, 1st October at 7.30pm sharp. $50 a head. Ring the club on 9645-9797.

Carlton have moved into their new offices at Level 2, 70 Jolimont Street, Jolimont. As the club newsletter says "Supporters are welcome, but please ring first on 9639 7744"

The Unofficial Beginners' Guide to the History of the Australian National Soccer League

is now available through Studs Up for $10 (incl postage)

or at Melbourne Sports Books (see below)

or at selected NSL club shops (just ask 'em!)

(Subscribers please note: Subscribers can use 3 issues from their current subscription – just send us a short note requesting that to occur.)

Melbourne Sports Books

9 Elizabeth St, Melbourne

(upstairs, next to McDonalds, Flinders St. end)

Frank Farina – My World is Round - $25, Perth Glory 3 - $14

Alex Ferguson - $50, Rothmans' Football Yearbook 1999-2000 - $60

PLUS - The Unofficial Beginners' Guide to the History of the NSL - $10

PLUS - Australia 1922-1998 – International Line-ups and statistics series - $10

Look out for....

ATTENTION QUEENSLANDERS - OZ v KIWI SCHOOLBOY INTERNATIONALS

The Kiwis are coming to Brisbane for a two match series against the Oz Schoolboys line-up so if you're looking to catch the best young players in action get along on, to, at

Sunday 26 September - Perry Park – 3pm

Tuesday 28 September at Brisbane Lions Soccer Club – 7pm

And we're reliably informed you can catch the Oz boys warm-up against the QAS at Perry Park at 9am on September 25 (Saturday) if you can get out of bed early enough....

OCTOBER 3 - On the Ball returns to SBS at 11.30am on SBS

Ericsson Cup (potential highlights in bold)

Round 1

Fri 1-Oct	**Auckland Kingz**	**v**	**Carlton**
Fri 1-Oct	Canberra Cosmos	v	Adelaide Force
Fri 1-Oct	**Parramatta Power**	**v**	**Marconi**
Sat 2-Oct	Gippsland Falcons	v	Perth Glory
Sun 3-Oct	Wollongong	v	South Melbourne
Sun 3-Oct	Melbourne Knights	v	Brisbane Strikers
Sun 3-Oct	Sydney Olympic	v	Newcastle Breakers
Mon 4-Oct	**Sydney United**	**v**	**Northern Spirit**
	Southern Sharks	Bye	

Round 2

Fri 8-Oct	Carlton	v	Gippsland Falcons
Fri 8-Oct	Newcastle Breakers	v	Wollongong Wolves
Fri 8-Oct	Southern Sharks	v	Sydney Olympic
Sat 9-Oct	Brisbane Strikers	v	Adelaide Force
Sun 10-Oct	**Perth Glory**	**v**	**Marconi**
Sun 10-Oct	**South Melbourne**	**v**	**Northern Spirit**
Sun 10-Oct	Sydney United	v	Auckland Kingz
TBA	Parramatta Power	v	Melbourne Knights
	Canberra Cosmos	Bye	

Oceania Club Championships in Fiji - South Melbourne's matches:

After the umpteenth change of schedule, we think we are right in printing

Sep 18 Nadi	Grp A	v Malaita Eagles (Sol Is)
Sep 22 Lautoka	Grp A	v Konica (American Samoa)
Sep 24 Lautoka	Semi	
Sep 26 Nadi	Final	

Group B: Nadi (Fiji), AS Venus (Tahiti), Kiwi (Samoa)
Group C: Central United (NZ), Talea (Vanuatu), Lotoha' Apia (Tonga)